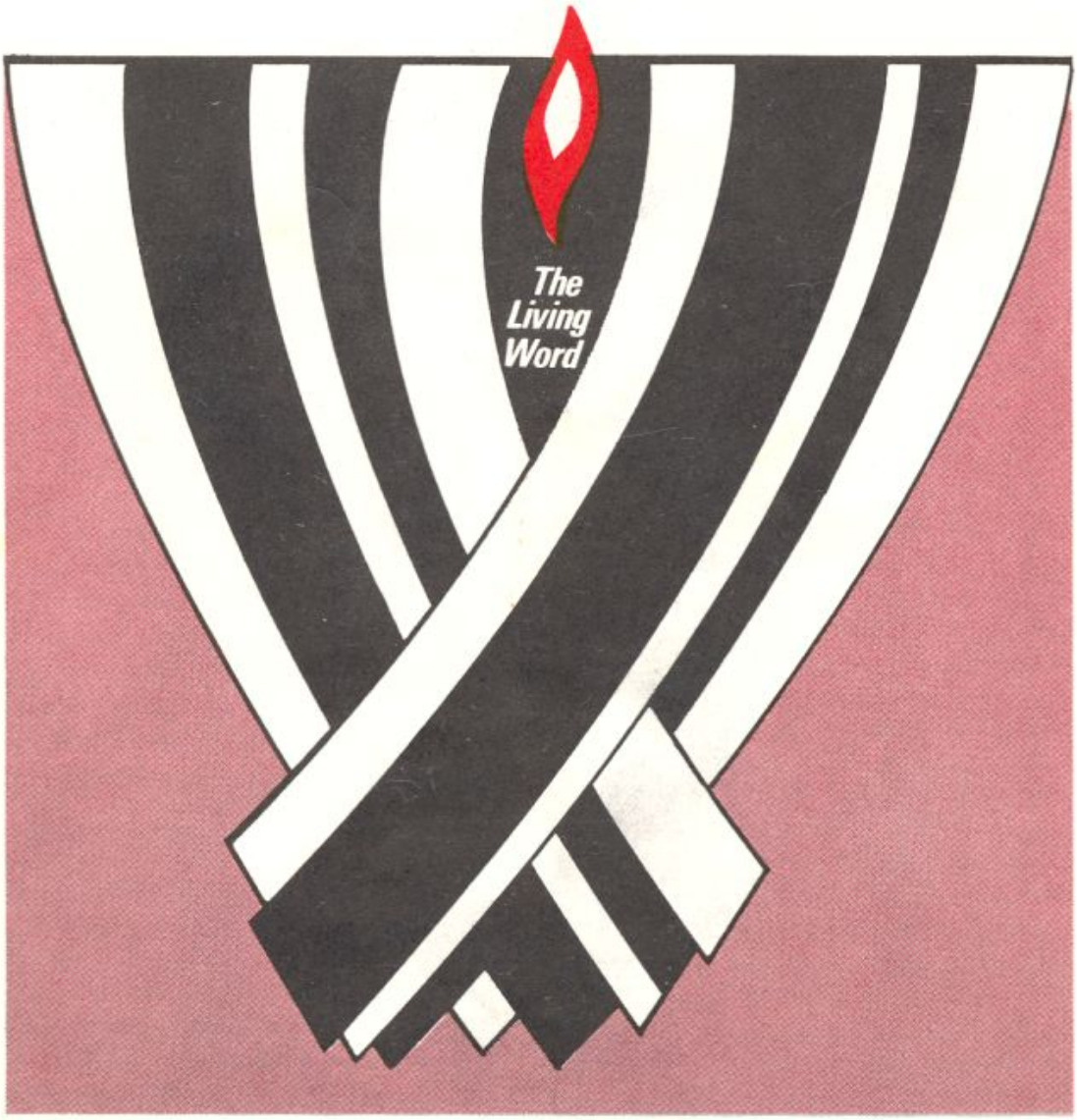
RESTORATION REVIEW

Leroy Garrett, Editor

November, 1974 Volume 16, No. 9



" . . . The Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power." — *I Cor. 4:20*

Volume 16, No. 9 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November 1974**

The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today. . .

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT CHURCH

In the days of my youth this was one of my favorite "evangelistic sermons"—identifying the church in name, doctrine and practice. I was persuaded that the true church could be as easily recognized as anything in this world. My favorite illustration was of the person who went to the railway station to meet a stranger who would be dressed in a white suit, a straw hat, and would have a cane in one hand and a bird cage in the other. No way to miss him! Ouida always chuckled at that story, and I am suspicious that she thought I was overdoing it, but she never said so. But the right church could be found just as surely as the stranger at the depot. Of that I was confident. If I could find it, by virtue of having parents that belonged to it, then anybody else could.

My thinking has changed some since then, though I still believe the subject is a significant one. I would no longer contend that the church has any name at all, whether Christian or Church of Christ, for to name it is to denominate it (or denominationalize it), which is contrary to its inherent oneness. If there is but one church, it is meaningless to name it, for there is no reason to distinguish it from other bodies. The Body is one, and, just like my physical body is one, it needs no name. And so the scriptures give it no name.

Nor would I now be so sectarian as to claim that *any* community of believers is right in doctrine, certainly not in such a manifest way as would be the identity of the stranger at the station. One editor of a Church of Christ journal recently made the point that our people have been making too much of *right doctrine,* but in doing so he made it clear that he believed that our doctrinal position is invulnerable in the light of scripture, that no man can touch us on that score. I have to question this. I rather believe that in every doctrine that is *distinctive* to the Church of Christ is suspect just as I believe that about *every* denomination. Any point of doctrine that cannot be given universal application (and is consequently generally conceded by biblical scholarship) is to be seriously questioned, whether it be baptism for the dead (Mormons), transubstantiation (Roman Catholics), "Once saved always saved" (Baptists), or total depravity (Calvinists). So with the exclusive view that to be a true church the singing has to be acappella. Or that it has to follow a so-called "five acts of public worship." Or that it has to wear the name "Church of Christ." Any community that assumes itself to be the only church is in serious error on a most basic doctrine, *the doctrine of the nature of the church.*

And it is sheer folly for any of us to contend that we are substantially better than anyone else in *practice.* That the modern church is far from what it ought to be is generally conceded, and we should all be busy making things better rather than to confuse the issue

by implying that some of us have it made and have need of nothing. I once debated the famous Baptist preacher, D. N. Jackson, many years my senior, on the proposition "The church known to me and my brethren as the Church of Christ is scriptural in name, doctrine, and practice." I would now be no more comfortable with that proposition than if it read *the Baptist Church* . . . The reason is simple. I do not *now* believe in any sect and have no desire to champion the cause of any of them.

Still I believe it proper to ask if the right church can be identified, right meaning the way God wants it to be. The church certainly has some clear marks in the light of scripture, and some of them may well be as distinct as a man carrying a cane and a bird cage.

Already in this series I have pointed to that primitive creedal statement "I believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church," and I have insisted that God's community upon earth is to have all four of those marks if it be truly His. The church cannot be divided; it cannot be impure like the world around it. It cannot be southern or European or white or rural, but all these and more if it be truly universal. And it must be built upon the testimony of the apostles rather than on every enthusiast who supposes he has some special revelations from the Spirit.

There are many other marks that are also important. It is a baptized and a baptizing community. It is almost certainly true that there was not a single unimmersed member of the primitive congregations. And each of those communities baptized those who entered the fellowship. Biblical scholarship generally recognizes that baptism was the door into the church, and we believe it should be no less so in our day.

It is an assembling and worshipping community. This is unique in the Jewish-Christian religion, for no other world religion makes a point of congregational gatherings. It assembled especially on "the day of the Sun," but at other times as well. The corporate worship was hardly uniform, but it had the same features as the synagogue in terms of prayers, reading of the scriptures, the saying of the Amen, and mutual sharing. It also had a love feast (in the earliest church) along with a memorial Supper, but of the frequency and the time we cannot be sure, except to say that "the first day" was the most usual. But in all this it was a believing and dedicated church, loving Jesus and looking for his return. The gatherings were fellowship in that the saints shared their common trust and hope.

In his book *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, John R.W. Stott is doing this kind of thing with the seven churches of Asia, looking at them in terms of identifying the true marks of the Church of Christ. He sees in the letter to Ephesus that it is agape love that Jesus found lacking in that congregation — "You have abandoned the love you had at first." Stott observes that Jesus finds that church with many good qualities, such as endurance and hard work. And they were sound in the faith, hating evil things. But a church can hate evil without really loving, Stott notes. If Jesus would threaten to remove

the candlestick from their midst if they did not repent and start loving again, then love must be an essential mark, every whit as important as soundness.

The congregation at Smyrna was called upon to be a suffering church—"Do not fear what you are about to suffer." Stott says the modern church does not suffer because it is too much like the world. It pleases the world. Let it preach those truths that really level with the world, such as the sinfulness of man and the wrath of God, and it will be persecuted as was the early church. He points to Lk. 6:26 where Jesus tells the church: "Alas for you when all men speak well of you." It was at Smyrna that old Polycarp served as a bishop. He was martyred because he would not renounce his faith in Christ. "Eighty six years have I served him, and he has never done me any harm. How can I deny him now?" are his words that come ringing down through the centuries in testimony of a suffering and martyred church. Is it to be otherwise in the twentieth century?

"You did not deny my faith," said Jesus to those at Pergamum, indicating that the church is to be the pillar and ground of God's truth, while Thyatira was commended for its holiness in that it would not tolerate the ugly immorality of the woman Jezebel. The Sardisians had a reputation of being alive while actually they were dead, the Lord observed. He wanted their religion to be for real, not phony. Stott thinks that when Jesus told them to "Remember what you have received" that he was talking about the Holy Spirit, which every believer receives at baptism. By being Spirit-filled they will come alive and no longer be dead. This makes reality—being alive in the Spirit—a necessary mark of the church.

Stott sees in those words to the Philadelphians, "Behold, I have set before you an open door," a mandate to every church to enter through the door of opportunity that God has given it. The missions will be different, but we all have some opportunity. A church is to do something in the face of opportunity to serve. And of the Laodiceans, who were rebuked for their lukewarmness, the Lord asks for wholeheartedness. He wants them hot and zealous, whole, or not at all.

There you have it within a few pages of the New Covenant scriptures, the *sine qua non* for the Church of Christ, the absolute essentials for the true and faithful church. A community that loves and suffers for Christ; one that guards the truth and is holy as He is holy; one that is for real, being alive with the Holy Spirit, one that moves through its door of opportunity; and one that is wholehearted rather than halfhearted.

These same letters reveal to us that churches can be busy and big, growing and rich, influential and powerful, sound and enduring, and still not have the essences that Jesus calls for.

The identifying marks are clear enough. There may be peripheral points about the church's life, organization and work that are not spelled out with the detail that we would like, but it is clear enough what the church is to be or to become. Once we get this straight the procedural uncertainties will not matter so much.

At the outset of our Movement Thomas Campbell came up with this higher view of the nature of the church, recognizing it not only as necessarily one, but as made up of people whose lives are renewed. He put it this way: "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else, as none else can be truly and properly called Christians."—*the Editor*

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SHALL WE "HANG IN" OR LEAVE?

All across the land we have people in Churches of Christ that have about had it when it comes to our dictatorial exclusiveness and petty sectarianism. They are something of a "silent majority" amongst the rank and file. Not always a majority perhaps, but at least a substantial minority. And not always silent, but usually so since there is little chance to be otherwise. Many are being heard from, to be sure, and they are causing things to happen. In another column of this issue there is an account of 170 who recently walked out of one of Dallas' mainline Churches of Christ in protest of creedalism.

I know enough about our congregations to realize that there are scores of folk in most all congregations that are treading water, endeavoring to stay up and stay sane in a sea of bewildering parochialism. I have long been convinced that if the claims of this journal could be set forth fairly and responsibly that a majority of the rank and file of our people would applaud the effort. Much of the leadership would also be favorably inclined, but they would be more fearful of the changes we call for. But all such reformatory efforts have to struggle for the narrowest beachhead. The poetic insight "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne" applies to us all who seek higher climes.

The entrenched *isms,* including professionalism and traditionalism, have the money, the press, the real estate, and the captive audiences. Those of us who love our people to the degree that we want to see them make those changes that will liberate and encourage must realize the odds that are against us. But *truth, ah truth,* can do wondrous things in the face of impossible difficulties. And if those of us who seek to reform (starting always with ourselves of course) do not believe we have the angels on our side, then we should back off from the whole thing right now.

Many of our brightest minds and most spiritual souls have already left, and we must realize that there will be more of this. Hundreds, if not thousands, could write a letter similar to this one that comes from Atlanta, from one who formerly served on the faculty of a Christian college, a most talented and dedicated person.

> I feel as if I'm adding a chapter to "Why I Left" or "Voices of Concern," and while I'm doing so I recall (with admiration for you) your stated determination not to be driven off by your brethren. I have "left!" and am actively engaged in musical activities and Bible teaching in a Presbyterian church.
>
> But why? I believe we were a threat to the fine people where we formerly worked. And they represented to us a fixed wall past which we could not grow. In a real sense we had to leave home. We are still "Campbellites" and nothing can change that. We enjoy working with the group the Campbells left. We are still Christians only, wearing no man's label. Contrary to the expressed concern of some, we have not left the Body of Christ. I can't imagine how that would be possible for a Christian. I feel no need to still all the worried hearts. It would in fact be impossible.

There is only one answer as to what our attitude should be toward such disillusioned brothers and sisters: *keep right on loving and accepting them just the same, and, to the degree it is possible, keep in touch with them in the tenderness of Christ.* It would be appropriate if some of us could go with them to their new church home for a visit, and seek to understand why the new environment has met needs that we did not. Never to argue, but to love and share. And continue to include them in social affairs, and look for those opportunities for them to visit their old home church, to show them that they are still loved and accepted. At the very least we must realize (and cause them to see that we realize) that they haven't left Jesus just because they've left us. Maybe we couldn't do what they've done, but then we are not they. They are marching to a different drumbeat. Ro. 14:4 speaks to this: "Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is his own Master's business."

Then there are those with a different kind of problem, as reflected in this letter from Virginia (the state of Virginia, that is!)

> Leroy, I am perplexed at this time. Three or four families who have been very close to us for several years, and who have been such an encouragement to us as we went through some trials, are now at the point of leaving the Church of Christ and starting a house church, which will conflict time-wise and geography-wise with the congregation. I am not opposed to their leaving if

> they feel led to do so, but I am distressed at the pressures this action will bring on the lives of many people. One of the men was an elder, whom I claimed as "my spiritual father," I am really pushed by their action. My firm feeling right now is to "hang in there" in spite of many discouragements, because there are more good things happening in individual lives than there are bad things. People are breaking out of bondage, one by one. Praise God! But, because of my desire to stay and our friends' desire to leave, some tension has set in. Please pray about this. Perhaps you can offer some helpful observations.

I wish we could persuade all such restive brethren not to leave and start a house church, at least not in a way as to leave the congregation completely. House churches are just great for our needs so long as they are kept supplemental to congregational life, and so long as they are kept open to all and not made exclusive. House churches have a way of wearing down once the initial brush fire enthusiasm has burned away, and people are left disappointed and separated. Or it has to go through the ordeal of "becoming a congregation," which may soon have problems as great as those left behind. And once people really leave—a bridge-burning kind of departure—it is almost impossible for there not to be bitter feelings, and there is not likely to be a return home. Leaving is like a divorce, a failure on someone's part. It should be resorted to only as a last, last alternative.

But some folk have to leave. That is a fact in the history of all reformations. When this proves necessary, we can only plead that it be done in love and without a spirit of faction. Separations do not have to be divisions in that the Body is actually torn, for brethren in a spirit of love can decide to work in different fields. This must admittedly be a rare accomplishment.

To those who are either discouraged or disgusted I would urge that you "hang in;" realizing that changes are brought about only from within. If we really love our people, we must stay with them even when it is difficult. Each must believe that the Lord will find a way with each one right where he is. "Grow where you have been planted" is not an empty cliche for these uneven times. And one must believe that better times are coming. Things are changing in the Spirit's direction. Not only among us, but throughout the catholic church. That God's community upon earth is going to become more and more after His image must not be questioned. How much *we* in the Churches of Christ are going to help bring this about is the question. I personally believe that this can be great, for the Restoration heritage has much to offer. As we sit among dead, tradition-bound, secularly-oriented congregations, we must not forget that heritage. Our forebears were *reformers* in the church that has always needed reformation. They taught us that the church will probably never be ideal, but that it is our task to be at work *within* her, helping to move her in each generation closer to that ideal.

Only recently I heard a reforming Methodist, laboring within his own context for that one, great, spiritual community of God on earth. Praise God that he is using this man where he is! He is talking to Methodists, in their language and out of their history, of a better and more spiritual way. It would be folly for me to try to take him from his own people, converting him to the Church of Christ. He should paddle for the old ship Zion where God has dropped him down. And I think it would be equal folly for me to become a Methodist, even if I didn't *really* become one, and thus cut myself off from my own roots.

I met with a group of Roman Catholics a few times recently, some of them being business associates of ours, who are really turned on to Jesus. In their own "sanctuary," with their priest sitting with us, I laid before them a long view of the scheme of redemption in scripture, God's eternal purpose in Christ. These folk want their people to get with it and turn to Jesus, and they are working to that end in various mini-meetings. How foolish it would be for me to try to bring them into "the Church of Christ," where they would become mere spectators of our own particular set of traditions. We are not really reformers until we have the larger view of God working on many fronts through all sorts of "unheard of" people. Knowing these people's views of things, I could well say, "You are not really Roman Catholics!" But that is what it is all about these days, whether it be among Baptists, Lutherans, or Church of Christers - and let's face it, there *is* a Church of Christism. But to a lot of such ones we can say, "You are not really a Lutheran" or "You are not really a Church of Christer," which only means that God is at work through His Spirit in such a way that sectarian lines are being ignored and transgressed.

This is why it is untrue that some of us are only creating still another sect, a "unity sect." This charge hasn't had much success, but it is still being made in the thunder from the right. How can anyone be promoting a sect who says what I have just said and who discourages people from leaving where they are to come where he is. A sectarian leader *always* does that. Since only his group is right, others have to leave where they are and come to him. To the contrary, we urge people *not* to leave where they are, but to peacefully (not factiously) work for reform in their own situation. To call that a "unity sect" is to grossly abuse the meaning of *sect.*

One further word to those who might grow weary of hanging in. We must not forget the doctrine of the remnant in scripture, in both Testaments. "If God had not left unto us a small remnant. . ." is a principle for all history. There are going to be but *a few* even in the churches who really seek God. We should resolve to be in that number, and to allow God to use us in ministering to others in His remnant. Turning it all over to the Lord, including our own lives, is what it is all about. If we are of this disposition, the Lord will use us in his way and to God's glory—and to our own ultimate good both in this world and the world to come.—*the Editor*

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TOWARD SPIRIT-FILLED ELDERS

Therefore, brethren, choose seven men of good reputation among you, men full of the Spirit and of wisdom; and we will put them in charge of this duty.—Acts 6:3

Some of the practices that obtain among Churches of Christ in reference to the leadership should be subjected to much closer scrutiny than has been the case. This is especially true in regard to the way men are chosen for this office and the treatment given to the qualifications laid down in scripture.

In many congregations, if not in most, the eldership has become a self-perpetuating body. The elders themselves select those who are to fill the vacancies in their ranks! It would be an interesting study to see how such a practice could ever have evolved among a people so steeped in democratic processes. The same people would be horrified if their local school board or city council attempted something like that.

It is *very* common among us for the elders to select the men to be added to the presbytery. The names are then placed before the congregation with some such announcement as: “If there are no objections made, these men will become elders two weeks from now.” In other instances, which is some improvement, the elders decide that the presbytery should be enlarged, and ask the congregation to submit names. From the names submitted, the elders will in one way or another select those who are to serve. I know of almost no cases where the elders stay out of it and allow the congregation to select their own officers. It is also common for the elders to select the deacons—and if a deacon (or an elder) resigns he does so before the elders rather than the congregation. All this suggests that the incumbent elders assume the office to be theirs rather than the congregation’s. To say the least, we are no more democratic than we are scriptural in these respects.

It is the congregation, not the eldership, that should determine the number it wishes to have as officers. The incumbent elders could of course make suggestions. But the office belongs to the congregation, not to the elders. That is why if one resigns he should do so before the community, not to his fellow elders, And that is why if there is a vacancy, or cause to increase the number, the church itself should take such action, preferably in a way completely apart from any role played by the elders.

While the scriptures lay down this principle, each church is free to follow any method it finds workable in carrying it out. In a community of substantial size I would suggest some such procedure as this:

1. The congregation should have a standing committee to serve as a liaison with the eldership for just such purposes. In a case where additional elders are to be selected this committee would serve as agents for the church in conducting the election since the elders should stay out of it.

2. The committee, in consultation with the congregation, would set a date for the election and lay down guidelines on just how it would be carried out.

3. It should be by secret ballot. In cases where someone's nomination is questioned, this should be taken up with the committee, not with the elders (Leave them completely out of it!) The committee, in consultation with other responsible leaders, would decide, in the light of the scriptural qualifications, whether a challenge of some brother is valid or not.

4. Finally those names submitted or nominated would be placed on the ballot, and then secretly each member, in an assembly called for such a purpose, would vote.

5. Once the men are elected or selected in some such fashion, the committee would then request an evangelist to *ordain* them to the office, preferably in some kind of ceremony, which could or could not include the laying on of hands. But it should be in some such manner that the evangelist would say, "In behalf of this congregation, I ordain (or appoint) you to this office." After all, the Bible does teach that elders are to be *ordained* as well as selected, and that it is the evangelist who does the ordaining, according to Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5.

Our elders in the Church of Christ have the unique status of being selected, even if by other elders, but not ordained. On a given day they become, *ipso facto,* elders without anyone appointing them to anything. The Bible does talk about *ordaining* officers as well as selecting them. In our opening passage, Acts 6:3, it is to be noted that the community of believers was to do the selecting, not the apostles; and it was the apostles who did the ordaining, not the congregation. Other passages referred to show that it was still the congregations that did the selecting, while evangelists ordained.

In the above suggestions I trust that I did not turn anyone off by recommending a committee for such purposes. This I did simply because a congregation, if it acts at all. must do so through somebody. If only elders are being selected, deacons might do this; but this could be a problem since deacons are often considered for the eldership. I am only saying that in conducting an election a congregation has to function through some agency, either assumed by someone or selected by the people. A good thing for some sisters to do!

This would make us both more democratic and scriptural. An elder is sometimes introduced to a congregation with a "You selected him as your elder." In most places that is hardly the case. Elders are serving congregations that did *not* select them. And the elders are serving unordained. It is as if we ignored the Bible. There is no need for this to be. To follow the scriptures always makes us freer.

Another hangup about elders is their qualifications. Judging by our practice, we place as much emphasis upon professional or business success as we do spiritual wisdom and exemplary character, if not more. It is as if the scriptures stressed business talent as a qualification rather than shepherd-like tendencies. We almost never talk about the need for

Spirit-filled men in the presbytery. But that is the way the apostles talked in Acts 6: *choose men who are wise and Spirit-filled.* They are talking about officials or functionaries for the congregation, and not deacons *per se.* This is the rule for all who would lead God's people, wise and Spirit-filled. The elder should surely have these qualities to a marked degree. He may be a plumber or a salesman or a mechanic or a teacher or a garbage-collector. Is he wise and is he Spirit-filled? That is what really matters. The qualifications laid down in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 are expansions of these basic qualities.

We are also hung up on biology. I once made a suggestion of a man to be an elder, one I considered both wise and Spirit-filled, but was told, "Oh, his children aren't old enough." One must pass the *biological* qualifications, and *if* he has children, and *if* they are old enough, and if they are members of the Church of Christ, then he has only to pass the "successful in business" qualification—assuming of course that he is anything like a "good member" with a passing knowledge of the Bible, though no big deal is made out of that last point.

I have to agree with old uncle David Lipscomb that the apostle had little interest in biology in writing out the qualifications for an elder. Paul does not say the elder has to be married and have a plurality of children, some or all of whom have to be church members. Those are our deductions. He does not explicitly say any of those things. And so brother Lipscomb contended that a bachelor or a widower might well qualify as an elder. I would agree, but would suggest that at least some of the elders have the experience of marriage and fatherhood. If Paul as unmarried could watch out for churches, an occasional unmarried man among us might well do so.

What the apostle does say is this: *He must be one wife's husband.* Now just what does that mean? I will not here argue the point, but I share the interpretation of most biblical scholars that he is asking for men who love only one woman, who have but one wife at a time. This would not rule out the widower who remarries. But this is not to say that he *has* to be married that first time. But if he is married he is to be a one-woman man, with an exemplary family, and so Paul asks for faithful and believing children, not riotous or unruly. We become legalists when we make such passages mean that the children must be church members.

A good case can be made for Paul laying down only *one* qualification in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. He starts out in 1 Tim. 3 saying, "A bishop must be a man of faultless character" (or above reproach), and in Titus, "A bishop must be under no charges." All the rest is an expansion of that basic demand for an unimpeachable reputation. The business world is not always the best place to find such!

But Acts 6:3 remains the basic test for all who would lead us. Perhaps all of us should be wise in the Lord and Spirit-filled, but those who represent the church, certainly the elders, should be wise and Spirit-filled in unusual dimensions. I would urge that we talk

more of a Spirit-filled eldership, and elect men to that office who are known for being "led by the Spirit."

This means that our elders will be men who bear the fruit of the Spirit in their lives markedly: love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, honesty, gentleness, self-mastery.

They should be unusually *good* men, *happy* men who rejoice in the Lord, and men who are *kind* and *gentle.* These are the kind of believers we hold up as examples before both the world and the church. *Honest* men, honest with the Bible and with themselves as well as others. All this is what it means to be Spirit-filled.

Once we get Spirit-filled men in our elderships we will not have such a problem with the very worst hangup of all, the notion we have of the authority of elders. Their authority is the authority of an exemplary life, not anything akin to the control that an executive has over a corporation. When I am in the presence of a wise, Spirit-filled man, I am going to yield to his leadership because of what he *is,* his *character,* his *changed life*, and these are the traits that make him a shepherd over God's flock. Never does such a man have to impose his authority (except perhaps to those who would come in as wolves) for his exemplary life demands our respect and cooperation.

One brother suggested to me that if we want to know who our "real shepherds" are in any congregation, ask the members to jot down on a card the names of those they would wish to go to if they were in trouble.

That may not be the whole story, but that is a lot of it. Yes, wise and Spirit-filled men are the kind we'd want to go to for counsel. I'm guessing that if in most congregations a request like that were made, the names on the cards might be an entirely different list from that of the eldership.

To the extent that we ourselves are wise and Spirit-filled we will solve this problem of filling the presbytery with men who are less than exemplary in these respects.—*the Editor*

McGarvey on Romans 14:3

In modern times controversy over meat sacrificed to idols is unknown, but the principle still applies to instrumental music, missionary societies, etc. Such matters of indifference are not to be injected into the terms of salvation, or set up as tests of fellowship.—*Commentary on Romans, p. 526*

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Notes from a Travel Diary. . .

MEETING WITH CHURCH OF CHRIST EDITORS

I have long contended that all the editors among the Churches of Christ would do well to get together, preferably on an annual basis. I once persuaded one of our enterprising publishers to put together such a meeting, but he has not yet had time to do it. So I was pleased to learn that the International Evangelism and Bible Conference, conducted by the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ, Monroe, La., began such a meeting for our editors last year. Eleven were present at the first gathering last year, and I was thankful to be among the fourteen that assembled this fall.

White's Ferry Road is the congregation that sponsors one of our better known schools of preaching, which presently enrolls more than 100 students. It also has one of our farflung radio evangelistic programs, known as World Radio. So the place is a beehive of activity since most of this takes place right there on the premises. As with all the schools of preaching, White's Ferry Road is "somewhat to the right of center," even in Church of Christ ranks, and for this reason it may be difficult for it to gather editors together with much diversity without it being awkward. Of the fourteen who gathered this time I was about the only one who could be labeled "toward the left," and there was hardly more than one or two that I would class as "sort of middle of the road."

My experience there indicates that they might not feel comfortable with the annual presence of editors of such publications as *Integrity, Mission, Mission Messenger,* or even *Restoration Quarterly.* And, interestingly enough, those editors of "far right" publications among us, such as *The Preceptor, Truth Magazine,* the new *Vanguard,* and *Gospel Guardian* (though not so far right recently) get along much better at Abilene or Pepperdine than they would at White's Ferry Road or at Sunset in Lubbock, but that isn't to say that they get along very well anywhere! And I am persuaded that the more "middle of the road" persuasions among us, such as emanate from the Christian colleges and such papers as *Action, Firm Foundation* and *20th Century Christian* barely tolerate the attitude and mentality of the schools of preaching. It's a long way from Abilene to Monroe, and I am referring to more than 600 miles! Not that far to Nashville, I'll admit!

For these reasons an open and free gathering of editors of substantial diversity and number would have a better chance of surviving on an annual basis in the hands of some of our leadership in Austin or Abilene or Malibu. But this is to take nothing from the vision of the White's Ferry Road in planning such a gathering, and I only regret that there was not a greater response. They are to be commended, and I think Hal Frazier, editor of *World Radio News* and associated with the Monroe program, did a great job in setting up the editors' meeting.

We editors had one session to ourselves, with Hal presiding, in which we discussed such common problems of circulation and costs. In a private dinner meeting we listened to a paper by Reuel Lemmons, which I thought to be unusually poignant and appropriate. Reuel impresses me as being altogether worthy of the mantel of leadership that has draped about him all these years. I am especially impressed that he is able to say much of what others of us say and get by with it better than we do. “I am concerned about all the sectarianism in the Churches of Christ,” is taken as an attack on the church if it appears in *Mission* or *Mission Messenger,* but old Reuel, bless his heart, can say things like that, and much more, and get by with it, even at Monroe. More power to him!

And I like what he said to our small group of editors (I would that *all* could hear it): “I want to be as liberal as the law allows and as legalistic as grace allows.” And he told us of the distinct advantages of disagreements. “No disagreements, no discussion, for there is nothing to discuss.” And again: “Disagreements are wholesome, while dis-fellowship is deplorable.” And he surely did talk like the liberal he wants to be, !as the law allows, when he said: “Some don’t know the difference between disagreement and disfellowship,” and he went on to insist that we can differ without splitting. He went on and on like that, such as: “If you don’t think for yourself, someone else ‘will think for you.” And he talked about original ideas, granting that there is no pain like the burden of thinking for one’s self against the crowd.

I was gratified to be with fellow editors with whom I have had little or no previous contact. Experiences like that will cause us to come to understand and appreciate each other better, as well as to cultivate mutual love, which will surely find expression in our journals. So long as they are “there” and we are “here,” it is easier for us to be at war with each other. We have too much in common to allow that to be the case.

Some publication ventures among us are most impressive. Alvin Jennings, editor of *The Star,* which is a mass mailing, home evangelism kind of paper, sometimes ranges as high as a half million circulation. The Thurman brothers (only Clem was at the meeting) in Ft. Worth send out 82,000 *Gospel Minutes* every week, most of them going to individuals. Noble Patterson sends out 24,000 of the *Christian Journal,* and Clayton Pepper mails out 14,000 copies of the *Evangelism Magazine.* There were also representatives from the *Christian Observer, Herald of Truth International, Christian Bible Teacher, Voice of Freedom.*

They arranged for each of us to tell about our respective journals, explaining its purpose, to the larger gathering at the lectureship, including the 100 or so students of the school of preaching. In my remarks I admitted at the outset that I have a lover’s quarrel with the churches of the Restoration Movement, and that my paper is the arena for that quarrel. I want all our people, I explained, to be freer, more open, better educated, more spiritual, more catholic, more worldly involved, less sectarian, and more responsible. I said

a word about my unity forums and mini-meetings, observing that *Restoration Review* is both a promoter and a reporter of such efforts. I also pointed out that my journal is concerned with "restoring the Restoration," and because of this gives considerable attention to our own disciple history, to our pioneers and the ideas they stood for. I noted that I had special interest in recovering for our people the inductive approach to scripture that the Campbells gained for us in the early 1800's, which calls for an examination of our own *isms.* An inductive approach to the Bible calls for our reaching no conclusions except those fully warranted by what is clearly set forth.

This made my journal somewhat different from what the preacher students were used to, so they filed by rather liberally, requesting samples of the publication. And I must say that I am favorably impressed with the calibre of some of the students at White's Ferry Road. They are willing both to share and to think, and of course they love Jesus like I do, so we had a great time together, several of them and I. They conceded that they had not yet met such a Church of Christ animal as I, and one of them remarked, "You're not just a little different, but a *lot* different." And they were by no means buying all I was saying, which was OK with me. I don't ask people to accept my views, but only to consider them.

I left there thinking about the young brother's statement, "You're a *lot* different," and I suppose that has to be conceded. The longer I stayed at White's Ferry Road, especially in what I saw and heard from the teachers of the school of preaching, I am tempted to call it an almost completely different religion from my own, which would not be a gross exaggeration. One of the teachers was explaining the justice of God, and deduced that to be just He must honor His own law; and so he went on to outline the plan of salvation as he understands it, declaring, "Even God can't save a man who doesn't obey it." It came through loud and clear, especially *loud*, that even the God of heaven is powerless to save anyone who doesn't belong to "the Church of Christ." God has laid down the law of baptism, and even if He wanted to make an exception, He is powerless to do so. That's because He's a just God!

I pointed out to some of the fellows that the brother serves a different God than I. As judge, the God of heaven can pardon whom He pleases and have mercy on whom He pleases, and in Rom. 9 Paul shows some impatience with those that can't get that into their noggins. If Congress cannot deny the President of the United States the power of pardon, even when it is unpopular, a teacher of a school of preaching is not likely to be able to inveigh upon the pardoning power of the Judge of the universe. The brother is actually stripping the God of heaven of his judgeship, I pointed out. As Judge of us all, He can offer clemency to whomever He pleases. We may not be able to dictate that, but God can, and it may not sound quite right for us to rise up in protest and complain: "Now wait a minute, Lord, you can't save Luther and Zwingli and Calvin, for they weren't immersed

'for the remission of sins' into *the* Church of Christ." The righteous Judge just might have some surprises awaiting the faculty of the schools of preaching among us!

Oh, yes, the list goes beyond the likes of Luther, for Thomas and Alexander Campbell would both be left out, for it was years after they were immersed that they understood the intent of "for the remission of sins." Also Raccoon John Smith, Jacob Creath, John T. Johnson, and virtually all our pioneers who "got in" on their "Baptist baptism," if there is such a thing. It would even include uncle David Lipscomb among the lost, for he insisted that one is immersed aright if he is a believer, even if he doesn't realize it is for the remission of sins and supposes himself to be saved already, and he adamantly opposed re-immersing Baptists. That is heresy of the first water at White's Ferry Road.

As for the idea that God is bound to His own law, and too bad for Him if He happens to want to make an exception, 1 Cor. 15:27 clearly says: "For God has put all things under his feet. (Now when the scripture says that all things have been put under his feet, it is plain that he who put all things under his feet is not himself included among them.)" So, contrary to the Monroe Doctrine, God exempts Himself from all the terms enunciated through Christ and the apostles. In judgment He can do as He pleases, and if He chooses to save Martin Luther and Elton Trueblood, it is *His* business. Thank God they'll be judged by the heavenly Father rather than by our brethren! With some of our brethren in charge, there'll be no shortage of room in heaven, that's for sure! (And I might add that when I return from some of these trips and tell it all to Ouida, she says, "It is just as well that your brethren are not to be your judge!"

I also sat in on a mock drill for door-to-door evangelism. The man to be "converted" described himself as a Baptist, but an immersed believer who had "enthroned Jesus as Lord in my heart." I later told some of the fellows that in that case there was no evangelism to do, for the man was already in Christ, that I would express my pleasure in meeting a new brother, and I would wish him well in helping bring his Baptist friends closer to Jesus and to the scriptures.

But in Monroe they wind their Church of Christism tight. The whole point of the demonstration was to show how to dissatisfy this man with his experience, and to get him baptized "for the remission of sins" and away from the Baptists into "the Church of Christ." I left the room grieved that I had seen a demonstration of *sectarian* indoctrination, not *gospel* evangelism. It was designed to bring a man to a party, not to a simple trusting faith in Jesus, which the "convert" already had. We are to evangelize the *unbaptized*, those who have not believed in and obeyed Christ. It was a shameful demonstration of how we have departed from our noble Restoration history into partyism. It de christianizes not only most of the immersed believers in the Christian world, both living and dead, but inveighs upon the heroes of our own Movement, who themselves were not true believers according to this ghastly ism at Monroe—and elsewhere.

So, yes, my religion *is* fundamentally different from that. But still these men are my brothers and I love them, and I would rejoice to see them turn to the catholic faith of the scriptures and to align themselves with the great heritage we have in the Restoration Movement.

Another Instance of Public Censure

The morning of the day I left, the presiding brother, who is on the faculty of the school and minister to the congregation, and whose lovely and intelligent daughter shared in our discussions the previous evening, felt that he should duly expose me before introducing the speaker. All that he said was not clear to me, but I took it that he objected to my saying that "love is all there is," or something like that (I don't say exactly that), and he suggested that I was one of those going about trying to reform others rather than taking care of my own business. But once he called my name I listened more carefully! "He is *not* a man of peace," he assured them, "and his fruits are not good." He was not telling the fellows *not* to listen to me, but to beware. "As long as you know what you're getting into …" or some such words. But he did say that I was welcome and that he did not want me treated disrespectfully, which I appreciated. The brother is a good man, knowledgeable and sincere, and I don't think he intended to be rude—or *not* peaceful! It shows how good men will allow themselves to behave at the slightest threat to their system.

When one makes a *public* judgment of this sort he is running some serious risks, the main one being the possibility of falsely accusing a brother. I do not blame anyone for harboring *private* doubts about a person on the basis of hearsay. But to attack a man in public one should be certain of his ground, and even then one should be slow to accuse in a situation where the accused has no way of responding. If one felt it necessary to attack me in a public gathering of our people, I would expect him to be well acquainted with my writings, and to have a firsthand knowledge of such efforts as my unity forums, mini-meetings in homes, and lectures before churches. A responsible person would surely not make a public attack on a brother on the ground of hearsay evidence. But I have found through the years that those who are most vicious in their denunciations of my work are those who do not themselves read what I have to say or attend my unity meetings. Our brother in Monroe will have to judge himself in this regard, for I do not know how carefully he has examined my plea.

Another risk that one takes in doing this sort of thing is that he might miss, and cause others to miss, some precious truth, however minor. I think of old John Stuart Mill in this regard, and I do wish I could get my brethren to read his *Essay on Liberty*. Mill points out that we have to claim infallibility if we presume to have no further truth to learn. If we have more to learn, the person we suppose to be wrong just might have some of that truth. Even if the person is in error, he is not likely to be *completely* in error, so we should hear

whatever truth he has, rejecting the error. Even if he be completely wrong, still we should hear him, Mill says, for this is not only necessary to a free society but it serves to diminish the error and elevate truth.

The brother in question was asked by his own students to have a meeting with me and them, for they wanted to explore some of the points raised with the two of us, which impressed me as a reasonable educational device as old as Socrates and Jesus. He refused to do this, which of course was his right. Whether he then had the right to go before a public audience and attack me, warning people to be on their guard in my presence, is another question. I would commend Paul's principle to us all, "We have wronged no one, ruined no one, taken advantage of no one" (2 Cor. 7:2).

Some of the students asked me if their teacher's charges were true. "Do you cause trouble in the church? Are you *not* a man of peace?" How does one answer questions like that? What am I suppose to do, stand up and cry out, "Hear ye, hear ye, I am a man of peace!"? I admitted that his charges might well be true, depending on how you look at it.

Reuel Lemmons had said to the same audience only the day before, "I am concerned about all the sectarianism in the Churches of Christ." Is that a peaceful statement? Might that cause trouble? Even our Lord said, "I have come not to bring peace, but a sword," and Paul had to urge upon his own brethren that they should not consider him an enemy because he tells them the truth (Gal. 4:16).

I took my 15-year old Ben with me on this trip, even if he did have to miss a day of school. I want him to learn to "love the brotherhood" through broad contacts. Besides, he delights in driving our Firebird, and I let him drive all the way there and back. He is still a little boy with a toy, even sometimes turning on his own motor, making noises with his mouth, in order to help the car up a hill or around a corner!

But he was somewhat bewildered as to why "they" should make such a big deal out of his Daddy being present at such a gathering, even to the point of giving him a special commercial. I explained that at any time in history when men try to change things in the cultures and institutions to which they belong, they have to learn to take it. Whether Galileo or Luther or Savonarola or Campbell or Ketcherside (the latter being one of Ben's favorites)—if he *really* tries to reform and not just halfheartedly—he's going to have to take abuse from those who don't want things changed.

"You mean it's like if you can't take the heat, you'd better get out of the kitchen?" he asked. "You've got it, son, you've got it," I had to concede.

Then he told me another part of the Monroe story. One of the speakers on the program, discovering who he was, said to him, "Your father has been a great help to me, causing me to understand a lot of things better. He is really doing something important for the Church of Christ."

So we drove along toward Denton, with both Ben and the Firebird purring, and both of us realizing that *even* in Monroe, Louisiana there are at least two ways of looking at something.—*the Editor*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

We regret that our brothers in Abilene have decided to cancel out the annual ACC Preachers' Workshop, or what is tantamount to that. Held annually in early January while the students were away, hundreds of preachers could move onto the campus and into the dorms and have a merry time in an exchange of ideas. And it was attracting folk from several different backgrounds of our Movement. It was one of the most seminal and effective things ACC ever did. So successful in fact that they could not easily drop it entirely, so they propose to make it an added feature of the annual Lectureship. Perhaps it got a little too stormy, especially the last time around when *Mission* was put on trial. But all in all it was a very good thing, free and open. Like Campus Evangelism before it, we mourn. its passing while thankful for its short, vigorous life. Maybe our folk are not quite ready for such openness. The Christian Church ministers who were with me for the last Workshop were amazed at such candid exchange. "We just can't do that!" they'd admit regretfully. To be sure, we'll rejoice over any remnants of the freedom of the Workshop that will be carried over to the Lectureship. But with a new time, new emphasis, and new format, it will be lost amidst the Lectureship and will not and cannot be the same. Too bad. But it will hardly be a ripple in the great ocean of change that is sweeping across Churches of Christ-Christian Churches and in the believing world at large. The Spirit of God is demonstrating that he is pleased to use all of us, but, if need be, he can get along without any of us.

Editor Ed Hayden in the *Christian Standard* tells the sad story of a Japanese prophet, founder of a new sect, who plunged the traditional harakiri sword into his body before an altar when his prophecy of a large-scale earthquake failed. The editor also tells of a prophet within our own Movement, of the new Pentecostal persuasion, who predicted that Lincoln College in Illinois would be forced to close its doors in five years for rejecting his message, and this was by "divine revelation." Those years have passed with the college stronger than ever. The good editor is calling for restraint along such lines, and he thinks it best if we find our "Thus saith the Lord" in the scriptures.

One lovely young lady of our acquaintance, christened a Roman Catholic, attends early Mass at her church, and then hurries over to a Church of Christ for Bible study, which says something for that class as well as for her.

A brother in the midwest is sending me details of a Christian Church of his acquaintance that has given up the organ. I told him about the Church of Christ in Mobeetie, Texas that had adopted the organ. We then questioned each other as to whether this means the Christian Church became a Church of Christ and the Church of Christ became a Christian Church. It is not all that easy to categorize these days. It is the party spirit that makes parties, nothing else.

A great gathering of "evangelicals" took place in July in Lausanne, Switzerland, called The International Congress on World Evangelization, the brainchild of Billy Graham. Some 3,700 persons were there from 150 countries. The 10-day congress sought ways to take the gospel to the entire world by 2000 A.D. It was the largest gathering on evangelism ever convened. Financial aid made possible a large representation from Third World countries. In Herbert Works' firsthand report three marks of the congress are listed: (1) the commitment to biblically sound solutions to the challenges and the problems, (2) unity amidst extreme diversity—all the way from Pentecostals to High Church Anglicans, (3) widespread concern for church growth, with a stress on the responsibility of every member of the Body of Christ. They figure there are 2.7 billion yet un-evangelized. Some of our folk would have a much larger figure, including even those at the Lausanne congress!

Robert R. Taylor, Jr. reviewed the Woods-Franklin debate in the *Gospel Advocate,* the first installment of which someone sent to me, scribbling in the margin, "Did you note the careful avoidance of calling Ben a *Brother?* It is *Brother* Woods but *Franklin."* True. Guy is referred to as *brother* 13 times, while Ben Franklin not once. Now, *brother* Taylor, is Ben not still your brother, however wild-eyed you may consider his pentecostal views? As for the report, it is hardly a classic in fairness, for brother Franklin makes all the mistakes and brother Woods none. I would probably disagree with both, but that is beside the point. *Both* men are my brothers, even when one of them abuses such passages as Micah 7:15 to prove that the miraculous period in the New Testament would be of similar duration to the wilderness wandering. *Brother* Woods ought to know better. But if something works in a debate. . .

Writing in *Logos,* R. A. Torrey III, reveals his attraction to the idea of restoring the church to the New Testament pattern" which he traces from Thomas and Alexander Campbell to Watchman Nee and Derek Prince. But he offers a sobering view: "The churches which have tried hardest to 'return' to the New Testament seem to be the most immune to revival."

Editor Reuel Lemmons in a recent *Firm Foundation* wrote: "The world is still waiting for a crucified church. We have a people converted to doctrine, but we do not yet have a church converted to Christ. Too many 'conversions' have really been church-joining affairs. We are the church on the throne; not the church on the cross. This body has not been broken and its blood poured out in sacrifice; it has been split and torn by keepers of orthodoxy and flag wavers who shout sound doctrine." The same editor said in his July 2 issue: "We honestly believe that the church is going to sit and watch our present preacher-organization situation continue to jell, and the church get into such a tight, straight-laced, organization-conscious sectarianism until it will take an open war in the brotherhood over it to ever get back again anywhere close to the Biblical arrangement. Most preachers will agree, but they are so congregationally bound and salary-conscious that they cannot, of themselves, make a move to correct it." Thank God for sunshine and Lemmons!

Wes Reagan of the Burke Road Church of Christ in Houston always has something to say when he takes pen in hand. He recently listed the rules for improving one's attitude toward the church. The first one is so arresting that there is little need for the other nine: "Tell yourself over and over that since you are not perfect, you would not fit into a perfect congregation if one existed."

There have already been over a million copies of the *New International Version of the New Testament* sold. We can supply you with a copy for only 5.95. This summer 28 scholars worked at St. Andrews University in Scotland, toward issuing the Old Testament part of the new version. It will take several years yet.

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OFFICE NOTES

There is excitement around our house over my proposed trip to Geneva, Switzerland to attend a conference of the confessional families of the World Council of Churches. The World Convention of Churches of Christ has been invited to have some observers there, and since they wanted someone from the non-instrument Churches of Christ to sit in on it, they have invited me. I will fly from New York with Bob Fife of Milligan College, who is both a dear friend and a fellow concerned one in the work of unity and fellowship. Following the conference I plan to visit "Campbell country" in Scotland and Ireland, including where old Uncle Alex was born, schooled, taught school, attended college, and, later in life, jailed. I want to see the old Presbyterian church where Thomas Campbell was pastor, which is in Ahorey, Ireland, which now has a bell tower, built by American

disciples, in his honor. I also have a clergyman friend, a kind of pen pal I have never met, in strife-torn Londonderry, who will give me a firsthand report on all that has transpired there. And of course I'll be in touch with a number of our own folk along the way. I plan to report to *you* in detail on this significant experience. This will keep me in Europe through most of December, but, the Lord willing, I'll be home in time for Christmas.

For only 2.95 we will send you *They Heard Him Gladly,* which is not only the story of the old pioneer preacher, Benjamin Franklin, but has several of his outstanding addresses. It gives you an important part of the picture of the early days of our Movement.

The Best of C. S. Lewis contains his five most prominent books, all in one volume, hardbound. *Miracles and Screwtape Letters* alone are worth the price of $5.95.

Our readers have really gone for *Love Therapy* by Paul Morris. It uses the Bible as medicine for spiritual and mental ills, emphasizing the healing power of love therapy. It really brings to life a lot of verses we glibly quote. We highly recommend it at 2.95.

If *you* love the Bible, *you* will revel in William Barclay's *New Testament Words,* which treats key words of the Greek in simple, down-to-earth terms, which is sure to make your study more meaningful. Only 3.95.

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Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas, on a second class permit.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $2.00 a year, or two years for $3.00; in clubs of five or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $1.00 per name per year.